

Graduating good citizens means good business

So you have just been named associate dean of a prestigious business school when the dean walks into your office and drops a bomb:

"How do we graduate good citizens for our democracy?"

"What?" you say quietly under your breath. "I thought we were turning out MBAs here."

"A vibrant democracy," the dean says with gravitas, "is a win-win situation for the people, commerce and public life."

"Sounds good," you think. "Well, what would you like me to do exactly?" you say respectfully.

Then comes the silence.

I've been swimming upstream in that silence for about four years since the Citizen Kentucky Project began with a community forum on civic life that became a Kentucky Educational Television program on the interconnections between politics, journalism, education and home life.

It has been enough time to see some of my brightest freshmen in another professional school — journalism — become successful college graduates from the University of Kentucky. I know they're smart. I know they are motivated, but did they graduate as good citizens? I hope so. But how can we know for sure?

Welcome, my friends, to an exploration into what it takes to graduate good citizens from colleges or universities in the Commonwealth. Whether these students major in business, engineering, agriculture, science or medicine, liberal arts or theater, they may end up running companies or other endeavors in our community.

If you're interested in this adventure, please join a group of civic leaders, journalists, educators and students for roundtable discussions on "Civic Literacy: the People, the Press & Public Policy," a Citizen Kentucky community forum. We'll meet over lunch starting at 11 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 14, at UK on the Student Center Patio.

We're not alone in this exploration — in fact, we have the Kentucky Secretary of State's office on our side along with state lawmakers and agencies, other universities and civic leaders.

Secretary of State Trey Grayson and his staff, led by Special Assistant Samantha Carroll, have been tackling the issue of civic literacy and civic engagement for young Kentuckians. In June at the Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning in Lexington, as part of a series of regional forums, they convened roundtable discussions punctuated with highlights over the last year.



BUCK RYAN
CIVIC LITERACY
COLUMNIST



In March Grayson appeared before the Kentucky Senate Education Committee to release "Rediscovering Democracy: A Report on the Kentucky Summit on Civic Literacy," which outlined efforts by the Civic Literacy Initiative of Kentucky and a summit hosted last October in conjunction with the Scripps Howard Center for Civic Literacy at Northern Kentucky University.

At the summit Grayson, a Boone County Republican, joined State Sen. Jack Westwood (R-Crescent Springs), State Rep. Tanya Pullin (D-South Shore), the Kentucky Department of Education, the Administrative Office of the Courts, as well as other national and state community leaders.

At UK, as director of the First Amendment Center's Citizen Kentucky Project, I'm working with a team of fellow travelers representing the Provost's Office, the Office of Experiential Education and Career Services, the College of Public Health, the Discovery Seminar Program and others interested in civic engagement. Whereas much attention is being paid to schoolchildren and teachers, I'm focusing on two different angles — college students and journalism — in hopes

of expanding the conversation on civic literacy and civic engagement. In particular, I'm wondering:

"How can Kentucky improve its civic literacy so more college students are paying attention to public affairs, joining in public deliberations, voting, volunteering and contributing to the public good?"

and

"How can journalists turn on — or inadvertently turn off — civic life?"

One of the principles endorsed at the summit last year mentions the business community's role:

"Although P-16 schools play an important role in developing civic literacy and encouraging civic engagement, families, community organizations, government agencies, and businesses must also assume some responsibility for promoting civic literacy and civic engagement."

Indeed, it will take a team effort. I hope you will join the team and you can make the Sept. 14 community forum.

Buck Ryan, a journalism professor, is director of the Citizen Kentucky Project of the University of Kentucky's First Amendment Center.

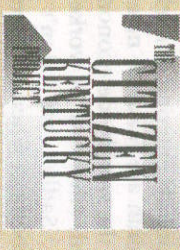
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UK to hold

civic literacy forum

"Civic Literacy: The People, the Press & Public Policy," a Citizen Kentucky community forum,

will explore what it takes to graduate good citizens from college. Join the roundtable



discussions over lunch from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. (or any time in between — we know you're busy!) on Wednesday, Sept. 14, at the University of Kentucky's Student Center Patio near the Free Speech Area. Buck Ryan, director of the First Amendment Center's Citizen Kentucky Project, will moderate the forum, organized by a UK Discovery Seminar Program class. He can be reached at bucryan@pop.uky.edu or (859) 257-4360.